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THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 71/NO. 12 MARCH 26, 2007

INSIDE

How Cuban toilers established workers state

—PAGES 7–8

New Bedford factory raid sparks outrage, protests

Immigration cops grab 360 at leather plant; March 17 rally to back arrested workers

More than 300 armed immigration agents on March 6 raid the Michael Bianco leather plant in New Bedford, Massachusetts. A March 17 rally has been set there to protest the raid.

BY BILL ESTRADA AND BETSY FARLEY

NEW BEDFORD, Massachusetts, March 11—A raid of a leather factory here last week by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents has caused outrage among many workers and other residents in the area and has led to calls for protests. A rally initiated by the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition is planned for Saturday, March 17, at 2:30 p.m. at the federal building here.

Hundreds of armed cops stormed the Michael Bianco Inc. plant here in the morning of March 6. By early afternoon, the immigration police had arrested 361 workers, most of them women who were sewing machine

Continued on page 3

300 at Vancouver event discuss book on Chinese Cubans in Cuban Revolution

BY NED DMYTRYSHYN AND STEVE PENNER

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, March 12—Ron Dutton, head of the Fine Arts and History Department of the Vancouver Public Library, welcomed 300 people to a meeting here yesterday for a panel of speakers discussing *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*. The book is published by Pathfinder Press.

Dutton also encouraged the capacity audience—more than one-third Asian Canadians and Asian immigrants especially of Chinese descent—to visit the library's special display of books and photos on the Cuban Revolution, including *Our History Is Still Being Written* and other Pathfinder titles. The display will continue throughout this month.

In addition to the Vancouver Public Library, sponsors of the meeting included the Association of Chinese Canadians for Equality and Solidarity Society (ACCESS), Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, Vancouver and District Labour Council, Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association, and Pathfinder Books.

The public library event was the first of seven meetings across Canada in the next two weeks—from here to Toronto, Peterborough, and Montreal—at which broad panels of speakers, including Mary-Alice Waters, the book's editor, will be discussing the book.

During the Vancouver leg of the tour Waters, who is president of Pathfinder Press, also joined more than 100 others at a banquet celebrating the third anniversary of the Chinese Canadian Historical Society, was given a guided tour of Vancouver's historic Chinatown, and participated in a second panel discussion of the book attended by some 80 people at the Asian Centre at the University of British Columbia.

Grace Schenkeveld, cochair of the Head Tax Families Society of Canada, chaired the library meeting. Schenkeveld remarked that one of the things that had initially attracted her to the book was that it explained how many Chinese, such as the three authors, "hold prominent positions in the Cuban army and government and play an important role in Cuban society."

In contrast, she pointed out, Chinese Canadians continue to face racist discrimination to this day after having been denied basic rights including the right to vote, citizenship, and entry into certain jobs and professions until after World War II.

Trev Sue-A-Quan, author of *Cane Reapers: Chinese Indentured Immigrants*

Continued on page 3

Iraq war escalation to last into next year

Washington ups pressure on Iran, Syria

AFP/Getty Images/Wissam Al-Okali

U.S. soldier on March 13 at military outpost in Sadr City, a working-class neighborhood of northern Baghdad, where Shiite militia led by Muqtada al-Sadr has its strongest base.

TROOPS OUT OF IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN NOW!

— Editorial, p. 9

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, March 13—The U.S. military's head of operations in Iraq recommended March 7 that the increased numbers of U.S. troops now flowing into that country stay through February 2008. The proposal came just a few days after U.S. president George Bush approved sending 8,200 additional soldiers to Iraq and Afghanistan. These troops are in addition to the 21,500 soldiers Bush announced in January he would dispatch, in the biggest escalation of the imperialist war since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

At the same time, U.S. diplomats used a March 10 "regional summit" in Baghdad with representatives of neighboring states, and of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, to press Washington's charge that Tehran and Damascus are aiding Shiite- and

Continued on page 9

Protests meet U.S. president during Latin America tour

U.S. rulers use visit to expand continent's plunder

BY RÓGER CALERO

March 14—U.S. president George Bush concluded today a seven-day tour of five Latin American countries: Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Guatemala, and Mexico. Washington used the visit to push for trade and other bilateral agreements that would open these countries to even greater plunder by U.S. imperialism.

Bush's tour was met by protests by tens of thousands of working people, students, and others in many countries on the continent.

Instead of focusing exclusively on aus-

Continued on page 9

First worker of those arrested at Swift convicted of 'identity theft'

BY FRANK FORRESTAL AND JOE SWANSON

DES MOINES, Iowa, March 12—After three days of testimony before a federal court, Lorena Andrade Rodríguez, a worker arrested in the December 12 government raid at the Swift & Co. meatpacking plant in Marshalltown, Iowa, was convicted March 7 on felony charges, including aggravated identity theft.

Rodríguez, who packed ribs in the loin department, was found guilty of using another person's identity to obtain a job at the Swift plant. In court, Rodríguez said she used another identity because she

Continued on page 9

Also Inside:

Australian government sends more troops to Iraq 2

Meat packers in Texas respond to 'migra' raids 4

Striking shipyard workers march in Mississippi 5

Federation of Cuban Women leaders speak in New York 6

More Australian troops head to Iraq

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia—Three days before the February 22 arrival here of U.S. vice president Richard Cheney, Prime Minister John Howard announced that the Australian government would send 70 additional army trainers to Iraq and extend the deployment of the 520 Australian troops under British command in the southern part of the country. In response to London's decision to withdraw some of its troops from Iraq, Howard ruled out any withdrawal of Australian forces, which now total 1,450 in and around Iraq.

Howard "remains firmly in step with Bush," Patrick Walters, *The Australian*'s security editor, noted in a February 22 column. He "sees Australia's Iraq commitment as a test of the alliance with Washington."

Canberra is also planning to almost double its military commitment to Afghanistan, with an extra 450 troops expected to join the more than 500 personnel already there. The plan would commit up to 250 commandos and elite SAS Special Forces for combat operations.

Labor opposition leader Kevin Rudd supported the Australian reinforcements to Afghanistan, while opposing further deployment of troops in Iraq. The social democratic party insists the war in Afghanistan is a greater priority for Australian imperialism than Iraq. Meanwhile, the Australian rulers are driving to expand defense spending and to transform the military and its ability to deploy alongside the United States or other imperialist allies.

Canberra is currently negotiating a military agreement with Manila, which will allow Australian troops to carry out "training exercises" with the Filipino military. U.S. soldiers already conduct such training under a similar agreement.

The federal government has also just sent 100 more troops to East Timor, including an SAS contingent, to reinforce 800 Australian and 120 New Zealand troops already there.

Under pressure to sustain overseas deployments in Iraq, Afghanistan, East Timor, and the South Pacific, Howard unveiled a $1 billion package December 15 to increase recruitment to the army. The federal government wants to boost the 30,000-strong army by 20 percent over the next 10 years, to the biggest force since the Vietnam War. Canberra has agreed as well to the establishment of a new U.S. military communications base near Geraldton in Western Australia, reported *The Australian* February 15. The base will serve as a ground station for communications with U.S. military forces around the world. Along with two other existing stations, these joint facilities are a significant part of the Australia-U.S. alliance.

The Australian military is "a force that has been tailored for Australia's interests and primarily for the Asia-Pacific Region," said Alan Dupont, director of the Center for International Security Studies at the University of Sydney, in the February 5 issue of *Defense News*, a Pentagon publication. "But it also has the capacity to be interoperable . . . with the United States."

Defense News also quoted Richard Bitzinger of Singapore's Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies saying, "The Pentagon's own transformation is shaping the ADF [Australia Defence Forces] and its Asia-Pacific allies." Canberra expects joint operations with U.S. forces to form a growing part of future Australian military missions.

Australian troops watch a British Royal Air Force helicopter land at a range in southern Iraq in February.

Cheney's visit to Australia was part of deepening this cooperation and also furthering ties between the rulers here and in Japan. Before coming to Australia, Cheney met with Japanese government officials. Canberra and Tokyo are negotiating a military agreement that will allow Japanese troops to train in Australia. This will be Tokyo's first bilateral security agreement, other than with Washington.

Berlin calls for bringing 'missile shield' under NATO

BY DOUG NELSON

In response to Washington's moves to set up anti-ballistic missile bases in Eastern Europe, the German government has suggested that the project be integrated into a NATO "missile shield."

"It would be smart to integrate this whole system into NATO," German defense minister Franz Josef Jung told reporters following a March 2 meeting of European Union defense ministers in Wiesbaden, Germany.

German Defense Ministry spokesman Thomas Raabe added, "The question of a threat from long-range missiles exists and this threat must be addressed." Raabe said any missile shield should ultimately be brought under NATO.

Washington has requested to install a radar base in the Czech Republic and interceptor batteries in Poland. The U.S. government recently signed an agreement with these two states to expand military intelligence collaboration. The governments of these former Soviet bloc countries have responded favorably to discussing the proposals.

For several years NATO officials have been discussing the prospect of developing a missile defense system to give first-strike nuclear capacity to the U.S.-dominated military alliance and its member states. However, NATO has not decided to commit the necessary resources to such a project.

The Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency chief, Lt. Gen. Henry Obering, laid out Washington's plans to its NATO allies at a March 1 meeting in Brussels. Obering said Washington will press ahead with the missile shield in Eastern Europe with or without NATO's approval.

Obering added that having a radar base in the Caucasus would also be useful, although no requests have yet been made to either Georgia or Azerbaijan. Armenia, the other former Soviet republic in the region, has close military ties with Russia.

Washington says the planned anti-missile system is designed to counter potential threats from Iran and north Korea and is not targeting Russia.

Moscow, however, sees the move, as well as the construction by Washington of "forward operating" military bases in Romania and Bulgaria, as threatening to Russia.

"We have everything needed to adequately respond to all these deployments," said Russia's air force commander, Gen. Vladimir Mikhailov, in a statement full with bravado on the U.S. missile shield plans, according to Russian news agencies.

In a February 10 speech, Russian president Vladimir Putin described NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe and the Baltic region as a serious provocation. "It turns out that NATO has put its frontline forces on our borders," Putin said. "And we have the right to ask: against whom is that expansion directed?"

THE MILITANT

'Provides information on the world'

"I read the 'Militant' because of the information it has about what is going on in the world."

—Bernardino Montemayor
Meat packer
Houston, Texas

Bernardino Montemayor in Houston. Sign on wall says, "Legalization now! Unconditional permanent residency for all! Young Socialists"

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300 at Vancouver event

Continued from front page

in Guyana, explained that the Chinese who were brought to Cuba, about the same time as the first Chinese came to Canada, faced even worse conditions.

Sue-A-Quan told the audience the story of how, in 1979, while in China doing research, he came across a document from 1873. It was a "contract of indenture" for his grandfather who labored in the cane fields of Guyana at $5 a month for five years, working a six-and-a-half day week.

"Chinese were kidnapped, deceived, recruited with false promises, and taken to countries like Cuba and Guyana," he said. "They were treated like pigs and dogs and sold like horses and oxen. Ninety percent worked on the sugar plantations."

Many in the audience voiced opinions like those of Howie Chan who told the *Militant,* "I came to the meeting today because I'm a descendant of two generations of head tax payers whose family origins are from Hoisun, China. That is where about 40 percent of Chinese immigrants to Cuba came from, and I'm very interested in how the role of Chinese in Cuba is different than in Canada."

Sid Tan, chair of the Chinese Canadian National Council, addressed that question in his presentation. Tan quoted Moisés Sío Wong's comments in the book explaining the reason the Chinese experience in Cuba is different is "here a socialist revolution took place."

It "eliminated racism based on the color of a person's skin," Sío Wong said. "Above all, it eliminated the property relations that created not only the economic but social inequality between rich and poor."

In contrast, Tan pointed out, Ottawa continues its racist policies by denying compensation to "all but 0.6 percent of families that paid the head tax" imposed on all Chinese who entered the country from 1885 to 1923.

Mary-Alice Waters, who interviewed Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong, and edited the book, brought the personal greetings of all three Cuban authors to the meeting.

"Armando Choy, especially, who would have been here today himself were it not for his leadership responsibilities as the head of the port of Havana, asked me to bring you his warmest regards," she said. "He was looking forward to this exchange greatly."

Militant/Sarah Alwell

Audience at March 11 meeting in Vancouver on *Our History Is Still Being Written*

Our History Is Still Being Written, Waters said, begins with the story of how in the 1950s a generation of Cuban youth refused to bow down to the indignities and brutalities of the Batista dictatorship. They took up arms and after six and a half years of struggle they overthrew the dictatorship.

"They didn't set out to make a socialist revolution when they triumphed," she remarked. "They just wanted to narrow the gap between the obscenely rich and the desperately poor. They wanted greater social equality, land reform, an end to the scourge of unemployment, access to education, opportunities for women, and an end to discrimination and racism.

"When the initial steps along that course clashed with the economic interests of the U.S. ruling families who owned millions of acres of land and much of the industry in Cuba, they refused to back down. That's how the first socialist revolution in this hemisphere came about."

Waters described the broad interest *Our History Is Still Being Written* has generated among Chinese and other Asians in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere in the hemisphere who are searching for a road to eliminate the decades, if not centuries, of discrimination and abuse against Asians in the Americas. They want to understand why the socialist revolution made by Cuban working people made such a difference.

Afterwards, around 100 people attended a reception at Rosie's on Robson, a popular nearby restaurant and bar. Nearly $700 was raised toward covering the costs of organizing the Vancouver meetings.

Those attending these meetings and related events here bought 56 copies of *Our History Is Still Being Written* and 18 other books, especially Pathfinder's newest title, *The First and Second Declarations of Havana*. Four participants also bought subscriptions to the *Militant*.

New Bedford factory raid sparks protest

Continued from front page

operators in the plant. Many of those arrested hail from El Salvador and Guatemala.

Bianco had 500 employees sewing backpacks and vests for the military on a $83 million contract with the Department of Defense.

Witnesses said police guarded exits while other officers grabbed some of the workers, shouting at them to lie on the ground. Several officers drew their handguns. Some employees fled when agents stormed the building. Helicopters hovered overhead to alert authorities of escape routes, said Corinn Williams, executive director of the Community Economic Development Center in New Bedford.

Viviana Luis Hernandes, 25, a sewing machine operator at the raided plant, told the *Boston Globe* that she sat in the factory for nine hours, handcuffed with plastic ties, while her case was being evaluated. "When this first happened all I thought was about my baby," she said. Her husband was also arrested. She was eventually released because there was no one else to take care of her one-year-old.

Those arrested were taken the same day to Fort Devens, a former army base in Ayer, Massachusetts. Due to pressure from immigrant rights organizations and some elected officials, at least 60 people were released the following day, mostly women judged to be sole caretakers of their children. State officials reported that two children were hospitalized for dehydration after their mothers, who were nursing them, were arrested and jailed. State social workers who went to Fort Devens reportedly identified four pregnant women or nursing mothers, nine single mothers, and seven minors, who were also returned to New Bedford. The majority of those arrested, however, were quickly flown to other states or placed in various New England jails. ICE officials reported March 10 that 90 of the workers their agents grabbed are being held in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The remaining 207 are in Harlingen and El Paso, Texas.

Factory owner Francesco Insolia and three of his managers were also arrested, but released on bond the same day.

At a press conference the day of the raid, U.S. Attorney Michael Sullivan said, "Insolia and others knowingly and intentionally exploited the government by recruiting and hiring illegal aliens without authorization to work."

In the evening following the raid, hundreds of relatives of those arrested, friends, and supporters gathered at the Our Lady of Guadalupe at St. James Church. Immediate help was organized to care for children whose parents were now in jail, as family members tried to locate their loved ones.

Buenaventura, who asked that his last name not be used, is originally from El Salvador and had three daughters arrested in the raid, one of whom was later released. He described the conditions in the plant. "They are only allowed two minutes to use the bathrooms and threatened with a fine of $20 if they return late to the job," he said.

Most workers receive the minimum wage, Buenaventura said. "How will the arrest of hard working people change that?" He was responding to a comment by U.S. Attorney Sullivan who tried to give a "pro-worker" spin to the raid.

"They exploited the workforce with low-paying jobs and horrible working conditions," Sullivan had said, referring to the factory owners.

Other workers made similar points. Efrain, from Puerto Rico, who asked to be identified only with his first name, has worked in the plant for seven months. He came to the church to offer his solidarity with the arrested workers. "Most of the Puerto Ricans and Portuguese are still working in the plant and the conditions are still just as bad," he said. "Nothing has improved since the raid."

Donations of food and clothing, including baby formula and diapers, have been flooding into the church, brought by neighbors, workers from nearby factories, members of other churches, and students from area campuses.

Hundreds crowded into the church here on Sunday, March 11 to meet with senators John Kerry and Edward Kennedy and representatives William Delahunt and Barney Frank. Delahunt said a congressional investigation into the handling of the ICE raid will be launched.

"My own church is urging people to make donations, money, baby supplies, and to help the church deliver items to the families," said Rhoda Purcell, a New Bedford school administrator, who came to the church to join others in solidarity with the arrested workers. "I came to offer any help I can give."

Workers and others in the area have already contributed more than $80,000 to help the families of those imprisoned.

Workers at Michael Bianco Inc. joined the nationwide strike on May Day last year to demand legalization of undocumented immigrants. About half the workforce didn't show up for work. The bosses eventually backed down from their initial threat to fire those who did not come in that day.

"We need to protest, not just sit at home and watch the news," said Monica Florez, 22, a New Bedford resident who came to volunteer at the church here. "We need everybody here. Together we have strength."

For more information on the March 17 New Bedford rally, call (508) 979-4684 or (508) 996-8113, or go to www.miracoalition.org

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

San Francisco

Racist Column in *AsiaWeek* Sparks Discussion of Impact of Black Freedom Struggle. A panel discussion. Fri., March 23, Dinner 6:30 p.m.; program 7:30 p.m. *3926 Mission. Tel.: (415) 584-2135.*

NEW YORK

Manhattan

Global Warming: A Discussion. Speaker: Peter Thierjung. Fri., March 23. Dinner, 7:00 p.m.; program, 8:00 p.m. Donation: $5 dinner, $5 program. *307 W. 36th Street, 10th floor (near corner with 8th Avenue). Tel.: (212) 629-3349.*

NEW JERSEY

Newark

The Imperialist-Engineered Breakup of Yugoslavia and the Fight for Self-Determination of Kosova. Speaker: Argiris Malapanis, *Militant* editor. Fri., March 23. Dinner, 7:00 p.m.; program, 8:00 p.m. Donation: $5 dinner, $5 program. *168 Bloomfield Ave., 2nd floor. Tel.: (973) 481-0077.*

— CALENDAR —

CANADA

Toronto

Presentation of *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution.* Sun., March 25, 2:00 p.m. Speakers: Cheuk Kwan, filmmaker; Colleen Hua, president of Chinese Canadian National Council; Laureano Cardoso, Cuban Consulate Toronto; and Mary-Alice Waters, editor of *Our History Is Still Being Written*, president of Pathfinder Press. Sponsors include Chinese Canadian National Council, Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter, The Chinese Magazine at University of Toronto, Free the Cuban Five Committee Toronto, Pathfinder Books. *University of Toronto, Claude T. Bissell Building, Room 205. 140 St. George Street. Tel.: (416) 417-3475, (416) 596-0833 ext. 3. (647) 292-0833.*

NEW YORK

Manhattan

March and Rally to Demand: U.S. Hands Off Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia—Free the Cuban Five. Sat., April 7. *Gather at Bryant Park, 42 St. at 6th Ave., at 10:00 a.m. For more information contact April 7 Coalition at (917) 887-8710 or visit www.april7coalition.org*

Workers in Cactus, Texas, respond to 'migra' raids

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON AND ANTHONY DUTROW

CACTUS, Texas, March 5—"It isn't right. Everybody was just trying to work. Immigration just came in here and took so many people away," said Nina Rodríguez. She was describing the December 12 immigration raid at the Swift beef slaughterhouse here, where she has worked for 10 years.

Hundreds of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, clad in riot gear and armed with assault rifles, descended on this plant that day, as part of a coordinated raid on six Swift plants nationwide. The offensive, code-named "Operation Wagon Train," was the government's largest single worksite raid ever; 1,282 immigrant workers across the country were arrested. The one here, in this small Texas town, was the largest of the six.

These 295 workers were given no opportunity to contact anyone, or make arrangements for the care of their children, before being put on buses and taken 45 miles south to Amarillo, Texas, where some were deported and others jailed.

Many coworkers and neighbors of those seized are angry at the government and immigration agents for the arrests and treatment of these workers, who hail mostly from Guatemala and Mexico. They also say that the already brutal conditions in the plant have worsened since the raids.

Norma Ruiz, who lives across the highway from Swift, was driving children in her care to school December 12 when she heard the helicopters overhead and saw the cops speeding on the highway. Later she found out that these were immigration cops and that all the side streets of Dumas, located 12 miles down the road, were cordoned off.

Ruiz said that her friend is still in jail. She is among the 53 workers that a federal grand jury in Amarillo indicted January 9 on felony charges of "identity theft" and, in some cases, "illegally re-entering the country after being deported."

An earlier request for an injunction to halt the proceedings to allow the workers to have access to legal and union representation, filed by United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 540, which represents the 3,000 Swift workers here, was denied by federal judge Mary Lou Robinson.

"We didn't know anything about what was happening that morning," a kill-floor worker, who asked that her name not be published, told the *Militant,* "All of a sudden the line stopped. Our supervisors told us to go to the lunchroom.

"There we saw cops surrounding us. They started grabbing people and handcuffing them. We found out then that they were immigration. They grabbed people whether they had papers or not. After a while they ran out of handcuffs and just tied some people with ropes. I heard one woman ask to stay with her husband. The cop said, 'I don't care if you are married or not or anything else about you,' as he separated them in different buses."

Carol Valdez, an office worker at the St. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Dumas, had previously worked for 12 years trimming beef at the Cactus plant. The church became the drop-off center for donations that poured in immediately after the raid. Valdez described the many donations, including a semitrailer full of food and clothing that came in from Kansas.

Not long before the December 12 raid Valdez's son was hired by Swift, where he was being trained for packaging. "He told me the immigration agents locked all the exits and doors as if they had detailed knowledge of the plant's layout. You couldn't get in or out," she said. "And they blocked all outgoing cell phone calls.

"Since the raid, we've been working longer hours, sometimes 10 to 12 hours a day, six days a week," Karl Jacobs, 23, said outside the plant.

Dolly Villarreal, a scaler at Swift, reported a similar experience. "The company has been hiring lots of people, but not enough to replace those who were arrested or who left because of the raid," Villarreal said. "And they are in a hurry to get production back up to the level it was at before, so people aren't getting the training they need." She said that she had heard from a union shop steward that some workers on the fabrication side walked off the line last week, because the company was continuing to operate it without enough people.

Far from being intimidated or divided by the raid, most Swift workers and other Cactus residents that these reporters interviewed expressed solidarity with those arrested and outrage at *la migra*.

Villarreal rejected the campaign of hysteria over so-called identity theft. "I understand not wanting to have someone use your identity," she said. "But I know people need to work and they need some papers to do that."

Cactus resident and retired meat packer Dolores Galván used the term "the people–killing place" to describe the Swift plant. "The Mexicans and the Guatemalans Swift hires are the ones doing the hardest work," she said. "For that they get jailed?" Galván said the laws should be changed "so that there can be legal rights for workers, from wherever."

That sentiment drew thousands of workers from the panhandle area to the streets of Amarillo April 10 and May 1 of last year to demand legalization of undocumented immigrants.

Kevin Dwire from Des Moines, Iowa, contributed to this article.

Chicago protest: No to raids and deportations!

Militant/Martha Contreras

CHICAGO, March 10—More than 1,000 demonstrated at the Federal Plaza here for legalization of all immigrants and an end to raids and deportations. Endorsers included the March 10 Movement, the organizer of last year's demonstrations here, and union locals of the Service Employees International Union, United Food and Commercial Workers, and UNITE HERE. Several UNITE members on strike at Lechner and Sons attended the rally.

—ERNIE MAILHOT

'Guest' workers at U.S. farms superexploited

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—Twenty-two Thai and three Indonesian workers filed two separate lawsuits in February against North Carolina farm labor contractors and recruiters in Asia.

Attorneys in the case say the workers were enticed to pay thousands of dollars to recruiters in Thailand and Indonesia, working on behalf of "guest worker" employment outfits in North Carolina, in hopes of getting jobs on farms in the state. Upon arriving in the United States many were not offered any jobs. Others only worked a few hours a week.

The cases are examples of the deplorable treatment and exploitation of foreign-born workers under the government's much touted "guest worker" program.

The suits were filed by Legal Aid of North Carolina. "The workers are asking for lost wages and transportation costs," Lori Elmer told the *Militant*. "Workers paid as much as $11,000 in transportation costs and fees to recruiters." Elmer is the chief attorney of the group's farm workers unit.

The workers are also asking for damages and other forms of relief for violations of their rights under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, Trafficking Victims Protections Act, the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act, and North Carolina common law, said Elmer.

Rice farmer Worawut Khansamrit earned $500 a year on his farm in Thailand. He put his land up as collateral to cover transportation expenses and recruiters' fees. Khansamrit was among 30 workers from Thailand who departed for the United States on Aug. 25, 2005. Upon arrival in North Carolina, labor contractor Million Express Manpower confiscated their passports and return plane tickets.

Two months later the workers were informed that there was no more work for them in North Carolina. They had been promised earnings of $16,000 a year for three years. They ended up earning $1,400 to $2,400 total.

While in North Carolina the workers were initially housed in hotels that had been inspected and certified by the state's labor department, with three workers to a room. Later they were moved into fewer rooms that each housed five workers. Finally they were moved to crowded outbuildings behind the home of the Million Express Manpower president. Their food rations were cut, the workers said, leaving them hungry. They were threatened with arrest and deportation it they attempted to flee.

After two months, the workers were sent to New Orleans to do cleanup and construction work. They were housed in a condemned hotel without electricity or water, and never paid for any work done.

Indra Budiawan is among three Indonesian workers suing the GTN Employment Services. Each of them paid $6,000 in transportation costs and contractor fees after being promised three years employment on North Carolina farms. Budiawan put up his family's ancestral lands as collateral. As with the Thai workers, their passports and return tickets were confiscated upon their arrival.

Two of the Indonesian workers were not offered work at all and the third only minimal amounts. All three were housed at a GTN warehouse where they had to share a bare mattress on the floor. When the workers asked to leave, GTN's head, Leeta Kang, demanded $2,000 more from them in order to return their passports and plane tickets. After two weeks without any work, Budiawan escaped to Miami.

'Militant' well received by Texas meat packers

Militant/Jacquie Henderson

CACTUS, Texas—*Militant* supporters from Houston and Des Moines, Iowa, sell the paper March 5 near gate of Swift slaughterhouse here. During two shift changes, 107 meat packers at Swift bought the paper. In a three-day visit to the Cactus area and Dodge City, Kansas, where another large slaughterhouse owned by Tyson is located about 185 miles northeast of here, workers and others bought 148 copies of the *Militant* and 10 subscriptions.

—KEVIN DWIRE

ON THE PICKET LINE

Striking shipyard workers march in Mississippi

Thousands of workers struck the Ingalls shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi, March 8 in a fight for a new contract with improved wages and benefits.

The strike began after 14 of the 15 unions representing nearly 7,800 workers overwhelmingly rejected the company's contract offer. The company is demanding workers pay much higher health-care premiums, which would rise from $144 a month to $217 a month by November 2009. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina workers there face steep price increases on everything from food to rent. Several thousand striking workers marched through Pascagoula March 12 to press the fight for their demands.

—Brian Williams

Thousands of striking shipyard workers march through Pascagoula, Mississippi, March 12 to press their demands.

Restaurant delivery workers, locked out in N.Y., fight for union

NEW YORK, March 9—Delivery workers are picketing two Saigon Grill restaurants here on the Upper West Side and in Union Square over inadequate pay and poor working conditions.

The owner, Simon Nget, locked out some 30 workers March 2 after they refused to sign a contract saying that they received adequate wages and stipulating that they would not file a lawsuit against him. Deliveries have been halted at both stores. The picketers are demanding that they be rehired with overtime and back pay.

The workers have joined the Justice Will Be Served Campaign organized by the Chinese Staff and Workers Association. The group has organized some 1,500 service workers in the area. Many of the delivery workers employed by Saigon Grill work 12-hour days, six to seven days a week, at $1.60 per hour. They get no overtime or meal breaks. Workers on the picket line told the *Militant* that the boss penalizes them with a number of fines. These include a $20 fine for coming back late from a delivery, and a $15 fine for each day they are absent from work for illness or any other reason.

"We kept working under these unfair conditions, because it's like this everywhere, though Saigon Grill is particularly bad," Yuguan Ke, one of the workers said. "But then we heard about other workers who fought for better conditions."

—Eddie Beck

Militant/Eddie Beck

Delivery workers picket Saigon Grill at 90th St. and Amsterdam Ave. in Manhattan March 9 over inadequate pay and working conditions. The boss has locked out some 30 workers.

Imprisoned Palestinian rights supporter on hunger strike

BY DEBORAH LIATOS

MIAMI—A Palestinian rights supporter imprisoned by Washington on a "terrorism" frame-up, began a hunger strike January 22. Sami Al-Arian is protesting his incarceration and an additional 18-month sentence for refusing to testify before a grand jury investigating a group of Muslim charities.

Last November, a federal judge charged Al-Arian with civil contempt charges for not testifying. Al-Arian said that a plea bargain with U.S. prosecutors frees him from any obligation to cooperate with the government.

Al-Arian, a former professor at the University of South Florida in Tampa and a supporter of the Palestinian national liberation struggle, has been in prison since February 2003. University officials fired him shortly after he was indicted for "racketeering, conspiracy to maim and murder," and of providing material support to the Palestinian group Islamic Jihad. In December 2005 the government's case collapsed when a federal jury in Tampa acquitted Al-Arian of the "terrorism" charges and deadlocked on other counts.

Prosecutors conceded that they could not produce evidence linking Al-Arian to "terrorist" acts. He was then returned to prison while prosecutors decided whether to retry him on the deadlocked charges.

Under an agreement with the government, Al-Arian pled guilty to "conspiracy to provide services" to Islamic Jihad. He would be given a prison term of up to 57 months and then would be turned over to immigration authorities for deportation. On May 1, 2006, Al-Arian was given the maximum sentence. He was originally scheduled to be released April 13.

In a January 22 statement before the judge, Al-Arian said, "In the past three weeks, I have been to four prisons. I spent 14 days in the Atlanta penitentiary under 23-hour lockdown, in a roach and rat infested environment. . . . In Petersburg, [Virginia] the guard asked me to take off my clean T-shirt and boxers and gave me dirty and worn-out ones. When I complained, he told me to 'shut the f_ up.' And when I asked why he was treating me like that, he said 'because you're a terrorist.'. . . These are examples of the government's harassment campaign against me that's been taking place for years because of my political beliefs."

For more information on Al-Arian's defense campaign, see www.freesamialarian.com/home.htm

Neo-Nazi march organizer was FBI informer

BY MAGGIE TROWE

MIAMI—A paid FBI informer active in the white supremacist National Socialist Movement (NSM) was central in organizing the NSM's march through Orlando's Black community a year ago, a February 14 federal court hearing revealed.

David Gletty, 39, was a prominent organizer of the march by 22 NSM supporters in February 2006. The demonstrators, protected by a large police escort, carried signs saying, "White pride" and "White people unite."

About 500 people mobilized to protest the NSM march. Some 300 cops were on hand to protect the neo-Nazis and arrest and harass the anti-fascist protesters. The police blocked off streets to make it difficult for many people to join the antiracist mobilization.

At the court hearing of two NSM members on drug charges, Gletty testified as an informant who participated in the alleged drug deal wearing a wire. FBI officials indicated they had paid Gletty at least $20,000 over the past two years.

The court allowed the FBI to describe Gletty as "Mr. X" or "CW" (cooperating witness), but a public defender used Gletty's full name several times. Uncomfortable with the revelation, FBI agent Kevin Farrington testified that Gletty "participated in [the march]. He did not organize it," he claimed. This statement was contradicted by the city parade permit that listed Gletty as "on scene event manager." Gletty also appeared speaking at the rally in photos posted on a neo-Nazi web site, where he wrote, "On 1/17/06 I got the permits and started the ball rolling" for the NSM event.

Daisy Lynum, an Orlando city councilor whose district includes the area the NSM march passed through, called for a "full-scale investigation."

In a February 16 statement the FBI said, "By the nature of its investigative mission, the FBI . . . must aggressively pursue intelligence avenues that bring it into contact with individuals and/or organizations in unsavory and/or illegal activity." The statement was released, however, only after Gletty's role was exposed, a full year after he acted in a visible and public manner as an organizer of the neo-Nazi march.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

25 CENTS

THE Mmilitant

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY/PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

March 26, 1982

Sixty percent of Guatemala's voters responded to the call by the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG) to boycott the March 7 elections, even though not voting is illegal. (Guatemalans can lose their jobs for failure to vote.)

News of Gen. Aníbal Guevara's election as president of Guatemala came as a surprise to no one.

Mass murder, intimidation, and fraud were but a few of the means used by the government to ensure that Guevara's victory would come off without a hitch.

Some 200 men, women, and children in the town of Santa Cruz del Quiché were decapitated with machetes on election day, a fact that was covered up by the Guatemalan army for four days.

THE MILITANT

PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

March 25, 1957

Sparked by 200,000 shipyard workers, the British working class is preparing to resist attempts by the capitalist class and its Tory government to make the workers pay for maintaining the dying British empire. The shipyard workers, members of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, struck on March 16 after their bosses had flatly rejected a demand for a 10% wage increase. The increase is demanded to help offset a new rise in the cost of living resulting in part from the Tory adventure at Suez.

Strikes involving an additional three million workers are expected to begin soon over the same demand. It could be the "gravest industrial crisis since the general strike of 1926," says the March 18 *Christian Science Monitor*.

THE MILITANT

Weekly Organ of the Communist League of America [Opposition]

March 26, 1932

Strikes are once again spreading through the coal fields. In the Pennsylvania anthracite region a large number of the black towering breakers are shut down as thousands of men have left the collieries. It is what is called an insurgent strike. The combination, of an insurgent movement and a powerful strike, has thrown both alarm and fear into the whole of the enemy camp. As it gained day by day during its first week it met the most terrific opposition from the united forces of the operators, the state cossacks and the United Mine Workers officials.

So far the opposition has not been able to stem the tide. While the state troopers are massed in the territory ruthlessly breaking up "insurgent" meetings and making wholesale arrests, more collieries join the movement.

N.Y. event discusses book by Chinese-Cuban generals

BY LAURA GARZA

NEW YORK—The gallery of the Asian/Pacific/American (A/P/A) Institute at New York University had a standing room only crowd for a March 8 presentation of the book *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution.*

The meeting, which drew 100 people, was one of the A/P/A's regular forums. It was cosponsored by NYU's China House, the student group LUCHA, and the Museum of Chinese in the Americas.

The book tells the story of three Chinese-Cubans—Moisés Sío Wong, Armando Choy, and Gustavo Chui—who joined the battle to overthrow the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. Through that struggle they became leading participants in the Cuban Revolution, from its triumph in 1959 to today.

The panelists were Kathleen López, assistant professor of Latin American and Puerto Rican Studies at Lehman College of the City University of New York; Mary-Alice Waters, the book's editor and president of Pathfinder Press; and Awam Amkpa, director of Africana Studies at NYU and an associate professor of drama at the Tisch School of the Arts. Lok Siu, an associate professor of Anthropology and Social and Cultural Analysis at NYU, moderated the program.

The meeting opened with the short film *71* by New Jersey–based filmmaker María Lau. The documentary depicted Lau's search for her Chinese ancestry in Cuba through images and narration.

López then spoke, describing the "floating coffins" of the coolie trade—the ships that brought some 142,000 Chinese to Cuba between 1847 and 1874 as indentured laborers. Some 17,000 Chinese perished on the journey, she noted.

Showing slides of Chinese-Cubans who fought in Cuba's war for independence from Spain, López said they were respected for their role in that struggle.

After independence, while Havana's Chinatown flourished, racial discrimination and racist prejudice remained part of Cuban society, López said. "The family of Gustavo Chui, whose mother was Black, stripped her of her rights to the child," she said. The three generals, she added, "credit Cuba's socialist revolution for ending racism."

Militant photos by Eddie Beck

From left: Kathleen López, assistant professor of Latin American and Puerto Rican Studies at Lehman College; Mary-Alice Waters, editor of *Our History is Still Being Written*; and Awam Amkpa, director of New York University's Africana Studies, at March 8 event.

Waters brought greetings from the three generals, including Choy who said in a note to Waters that the meeting was taking place on International Women's Day. She also greeted Jorge Luis Dustet, of the Cuban diplomatic mission to the United Nations, and Maritzel González, a visiting leader of the Federation of Cuban Women, who were both present.

The three generals were part of a generation in Cuba that refused to accept the brutality of the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship, Waters noted. When the revolution instituted measures to address the vast disparity between rich and poor, it "earned the implacable hostility of American imperialism," she said.

Waters said Pathfinder Press is a unique publishing house. "It is not an academic but a political publisher," she said. *Our History Is Still Being Written* and other books published by Pathfinder, like many with the speeches of Malcolm X, are intended above all for those in the United States today "who refuse to bow down" like the three Cuban revolutionaries interviewed in the book.

Amkpa, originally from Nigeria, spoke about Cuba's record in Africa. He also described the conditions facing most Africans today, for whom, unlike in Cuba, the anticolonial movements brought formal independence but not greater social equality, national unity, and the uprooting of the property relations that are the base of race and sex discrimination.

"Cuba became a natural ally of the anticolonial movement," he noted. "The Cubans not only checked, but turned around the war in Angola." The three generals all served as part of Cuba's campaign in 1975–91 to defend newly independent Angola from invasions by the South African apartheid regime.

"The Cubans substantially reorganized rural health systems in Nigeria," he said, describing how the Nigerian doctors wouldn't go there. The Cuban doctors, he explained, became the backbone of the public health system in the countryside.

Responding to a question in the discussion period on whether Cuba's and China's image have changed over time, Amkpa said, "During the Cold War, the image of China was much bigger and higher. China was seen as an ally of the anticolonial movement."

China is viewed differently today, he added. "Its activities in Africa are now state capitalist." While Beijing invests in mining and elsewhere, most Africans don't see benefits from these operations.

"Cuba's image has not changed," Amkpa said. "Cuba has not lost its place yet and I don't think it will."

Ten people bought the book, and many stayed for a reception at the end.

Federation of Cuban Women leaders speak in N.Y.

BY PAUL PEDERSON AND OLGA RODRIGUEZ

NEW YORK, March 10—A public meeting here tonight featured two leaders of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), which was established in Cuba after the triumph of the revolution there in 1959. The event, which drew more than 130 people, was held in the Martin Luther King Labor Center of 1199/SEIU United Healthcare Workers union.

"At a time when we take special care to celebrate the contributions of women to progressive struggles, it is an honor to have these two compañeras here with us," said Frank Velgara of the Popular Education Project to Free the Cuban Five. Velgara chaired the program along with Maura DeLuca of the Young Socialists.

In addition to those two organizations, sponsors of the meeting included the Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle, ANSWER coalition, Casa de las Americas, Cuba Solidarity New York, Communist Party USA, Freedom Socialist Party, Haiti Support Network, Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico (New York branch), People's Organization for Progress, ProLibertad, Radical Women, Socialist Workers Party, and Workers World Party.

The FMC leaders, Maritzel González and Alicia González, had just concluded their work at the February 26–March 9 meeting of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

"Ever since the triumph of the revolution, Cuban women have played a major role in creating the new society," Alicia González said in her opening remarks. They have advanced despite Washington's efforts to topple the revolution through an economic war and armed attacks against Cuba. This aggression, she stated, is "the most serious form of violence against Cuban women."

In her remarks, Maritzel González encouraged participation in the congress of the International Democratic Federation of Women, in Venezuela, April 11–22.

The two FMC leaders devoted much of the meeting to answering questions from the audience. The topics ranged from prostitution and domestic violence, to the pay of Cuban women compared to men, and women's role in Cuba's internationalist missions.

Militant/Eddie Beck

From left: Federation of Cuban Women leaders Maritzel González and Alicia González; and chairpeople Maura DeLuca, Frank Velgara.

"Before the revolution there were up to 100,000 prostitutes in Havana," Alicia González said. "After the revolution, these women were treated with compassion. They were trained to find other work."

Prostitution, she said, reemerged after the Cuban government expanded tourism to counter the economic crisis that hit when aid and trade in preferential terms with the former Soviet bloc countries ended abruptly in the early 1990s.

Prostitution is not sanctioned or encouraged by the state as it is in many other countries, she added. She also noted that the prostitutes themselves are not criminalized by Cuban law, which only imposes severe penalties on pimps.

In Cuba there is also a very strong social network that helps prevent domestic violence, including violence against women, she said. "The FMC has 176 centers spread across every municipality, but these are not 'shelters.' Their function is to help and educate women."

Today women comprise some 46 percent of the Cuban labor force, Maritzel González said. In the health and education sectors they exceed 70 percent.

"We have many women doctors on volunteer missions in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and the Americas," she said.

"Among the first laws of the revolution was equal pay for equal work," Alicia González noted. "Since 1964 access to abortion has been guaranteed as a right, free of charge, at a woman's request. The only restriction is that the operation be done at a hospital," she pointed out.

"Cuban women are granted 18 weeks of maternity leave at full pay," she continued. "And until the baby is one year old they have the right to stay home and receive 60 percent of their salary."

Since 2003, fathers are allowed to take this leave as well, she noted. "But until now, only 17 men in the country have taken advantage of this new law." This shows, she added, that in Cuba laws are also used to educate, in this case, men.

She recommended the 2005 Cuban documentary *With Our Memory In the Future*, by Octavio Cortázar, which shows the progress and challenges in the battle for women's equality in Cuba.

"Since the triumph of the revolution, the Cuban government has invested a lot of resources and wealth into advancing the position of women in society," Alicia González concluded. "We have defended the revolution, which is what has allowed us to achieve what we have."

Many stayed around following the program to mingle. "I liked the whole talk about the revolution within the revolution," said Lindsey Mangeri, 20, a student from the state university in Albany, New York. "They explained that women don't sit and wait for the revolution to come in order to fight for equality and solidarity."

Our History Is Still Being Written

THE STORY OF THREE CHINESE-CUBAN GENERALS IN THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

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How Cuban toilers established workers state

They met each blow by Washington, Cuban bosses with a revolutionary counterblow

BY LUIS MADRID

"The first National General Assembly of the Cuban People was convoked on September 2, 1960, during the most intense period of mass mobilization the revolution had yet known," writes Mary-Alice Waters in her preface to *The First and Second Declarations of Havana,* just released by Pathfinder Press.

When the First Declaration of Havana was read that September day by Fidel Castro, Cuba's prime minister at the time, and a central leader of the Cuban Revolution, more than 1 million people raised their hands in approval.

Condemning "the exploitation of man by man, and the exploitation of underdeveloped countries by imperialist finance capital," the document proclaimed "the right of peasants to the land; the right of workers to the fruit of their labor; the right of children to education . . . the right of states to nationalize the imperialist monopolies, thereby recovering their national wealth and resources; the right of countries to engage freely in trade with all the peoples of the world; the right of nations to their full sovereignty."

The road to conquering those rights had been opened in Cuba 20 months earlier, when working people, under the leadership of the July 26 Movement and the Rebel Army, had overthrown the hated U.S.-backed tyranny of Fulgencio Batista.

The weeks leading up to and following the Declaration of Havana were marked by sharp class battles. The toilers of Cuba responded with resolve to every blow by U.S. imperialism in league with Cuban counterrevolutionaries, defending their gains by deepening inroads into the prerogatives of the capitalists and landlords, Cuban and foreign-born.

Oil workers in Cuba embraced June 1960 "interventions" of Texaco, Esso, and Shell refineries, ensuring production would not be interrupted. Rifles at the ready, with their militia uniforms, they guarded the installations. These companies had refused to refine oil imported from USSR.

'Interventions'

Upon taking power on Jan. 1, 1959, the revolutionary government immediately began responding to the demands and political initiatives of workers and poor farmers. Rents were cut in half. Utility rates were slashed. Laws ending discrimination against Blacks were enacted and enforced. By mid-May of that year, as peasants and farm workers occupied land and resisted plunder and indignities by landlords, a deep-going agrarian reform was launched. Holdings of more than 1,000 acres were nationalized. More than 100,000 small farmers, sharecroppers, and others in the countryside were given deeds to the land they tilled.

Through their own actions, and with resolute backing and encouragement from the revolutionary government, working people grew increasingly self-confident. They organized and mobilized to stifle attempts at economic sabotage by bosses—Cuban and foreign-born—while taking greater control over running their respective industries, including conditions on the job.

From the start, the property of the former dictator and his cronies was "intervened"—a process in which committees appointed by the revolutionary government assumed control of these companies, and audited their books. Workers—in many cases, former rebel fighters—began organizing to help operate these businesses in the interests of working people. Similarly, the government began intervening companies that were firing workers, or refusing to address their demands in labor disputes.

Probes against two U.S.-owned public utilities were launched shortly after the triumph. These resulted in the intervention of the Cuban Telephone Co. on March 3, 1959, and a government audit of the Cuban Electric Co. in April.

The government ordered phone rates rolled back to the level prior to March 13, 1957, the day Batista had authorized the local subsidiary of U.S. conglomerate International Telegraph and Telephone (ITT) to double its rates. Batista's payoff from ITT had been $3 million and a solid gold telephone. Phone workers helped implement the new decree by resetting 4,575 pay phones in Havana in four hours.

Along with the audit, Cuban Electric was forced to reinstate with full back pay hundreds of workers fired as far back as 1952 because of their political activity against Batista. Inspection of its books exposed practices of inflating costs to overcharge for services, and of transferring profits in the form of "expenses" and other "non-itemized" payments to its parent company, the American & Foreign Power. By August 1960, the commission supervising the company's operations reported that by eliminating managers' and lawyers' fees, advertising, and similar expenses, Cuba would save $2 million annually that could be used to develop the country and meet pressing social needs.

Throughout this whole period, numerous other such battles by working people were reported in the Cuban press. Here are a few examples:

• With documents in hand, including copies of checks and a detailed description of the bosses' plans, the workers at El Morro cement factory blocked an embezzlement attempt by its U.S. and Cuban managers, leading to their intervention on Aug. 20, 1960.

• The following weekend, telephone workers carried out "Operation Tape," fixing permanently, over two days of voluntary labor, more than half of the 501 temporary cable splices in Havana. Calixto de la Nuez, one of the most experienced workers, volunteered to lead a "cable workers academy" to teach soldering, blueprint reading, and more.

• After the U.S. owner of Continental, a can manufacturer, fled the island, lathe operator Leonelo Abello led an intervention of the plant by its 600 workers. They organized to increase productivity and ensure that goals were met daily, including by volunteering overtime when needed.

• In August 1960, salespeople at Rohele, a fabric and yarn store, demanded it be intervened for discrimination in its refusing lay-away sales to Blacks and members of the armed forces.

• Working people in the cities led efforts such as "Operation Cow" and "Operation Seeds" through their unions and workplaces to purchase cows, pigs, seeds, and more for the newly established farm cooperatives on land nationalized under the 1959 agrarian reform (there were more than 750 co-ops by May 1960).

In a related measure, at the end of August 1960, the Labor Ministry approved a resolution establishing the Councils of Technical Advice, made up of workers and new managers of intervened factories to help workers learn to run them.

Battle against oil monopolies

Imperialist-organized attacks seeking to undermine the revolution—air raids to burn cane fields, bombings, diplomatic pressures—were accompanied by attempts to sabotage Cuba's economy.

Early in 1960, the revolutionary government had reached trade agreements with the Soviet Union, including oil purchases that could save Cuba $24 million yearly. Texaco, Esso, and Shell saw this as a threat to their monopoly practices, by which, for instance, they would "purchase" a $2.10 barrel of oil from their parent companies at $2.80 and then sell it in Cuba at a profit. They refused to refine the Soviet oil and muscled shipping companies abroad to stop transporting it.

The revolutionary government responded on June 28 of that year with Resolution 188: if Texaco continued to refuse refining oil imported from the USSR, the Cuban Oil Institute (ICP) would intervene the U.S. oil giant.

The following day, in Santiago de Cuba, Alfredo Estrada, of the revolutionary government's oil institute, presented the resolution to assistant manager Robert Carter. Estrada instructed Carter to process 80,000 barrels of oil the government was holding in tanks in Santiago. Carter responded that Texaco was under no obligation to process oil other than its own. The government proceeded to nationalize the refinery.

The intervention "provoked great joy among the workers," *Revolución,* the daily newspaper of the July 26 Movement, reported. "They organized a spontaneous rally in support of the measure and the revolutionary government," it said. Workers and technicians pledged that "work will not stop and the Cuban oil will be rapidly processed." Rifles at the ready and sporting their militia uniforms, refinery workers guarded the facilities. The *Revolución* reporter noted that a dismayed boss, answering the phone right in the midst of these events, limited himself to uttering, in English, "Not so good!"

Decrees 189 and 190, enforced against British-owned Shell and U.S.-owned Esso two days later, proved timely as well. It turned out that all three outfits had suspended importing oil for weeks and had supplies left for no more than a couple of days.

By the end of August, 35 tankers, carrying over 3.5 million barrels of crude from the Soviet Union, had reached Cuban ports.

Throughout the country, working people hailed the interventions of the imperialist-owned refineries, exploding in spontaneous marches and rallies of support—Guantánamo rail workers; Havana construction and port workers; tobacco workers in Ciego de Ávila; carpenters, stevedores, store employees, shoe makers, and cooks in Oriente province; as well as sugar cane workers in mills across the island.

U.S. 'Dagger Law'

The efforts by Cuba's working people to exert control over their national patrimony were met with what they termed the "Dagger Law," adopted by the U.S. Congress and signed into law July 6, 1960, by U.S. president Dwight Eisenhower. The law slashed by 95 percent—some 700,000 tons—that year's sugar quota Washington had agreed to

Continued on page 8

The First and Second Declarations of Havana

These uncompromising indictments of imperialist plunder and "the exploitation of man by man," adopted by million-strong assemblies of the Cuban people in 1960 and 1962, affirm the power of the great mass of toiling humanity that "has begun to march." They continue to stand as manifestos of revolutionary struggle by working people the world over. Also in Spanish. $10

Special pre-publication offer: $7.50 (good until April 1)

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Cuban toilers

Continued from page 7

import from Cuba.

At the closing of an assembly of sugar cane workers in Artemisa, Pinar del Río, the previous week, Fidel Castro had explained how the Cuban people would respond to Washington's stepped-up threats and hostile measures. "If they try to starve our people into submission . . . the Yankees will end up here without even the tacks of their shoes," Castro said. "As they take away the quota pound by pound, we will take away from them sugar mill by sugar mill, and wrest penny by penny from them, up to the last U.S. investment in Cuba."

The battle cry, Castro said to an uproar of approval, must be: *"¡Sin cuota, pero sin amo. Sin americanos, pero con patria!"* (Without quota, but without a master! Without the Americans, but with a homeland!)

Within 72 hours of Washington's slashing the sugar quota, Moscow announced it would purchase all Cuban sugar the U.S. rulers refused to buy. Beijing followed suit, purchasing another half million tons.

As these battles kept sharpening, Castro addressed millions on national television and radio on July 18, 1960, calling on Cuban toilers to be conscious the revolution had entered a "stage of struggle of immense importance."

To carry out an agrarian reform, to free the peasantry, as the July 26 Movement had pledged from its origins, "You had to start by harming the interests of the powerful U.S. companies," Castro said. "To reduce phone rates, you had to harm the interest of the powerful telephone company. . . . If you wanted to lower electric rates, you had to harm the interests of the powerful electric trust. . . . If you wanted to get cheaper oil, you had harm big oil interests.

"How can you possibly think you can make a revolution without clashing with those interests?" Castro said.

It was these class battles that helped pave the road for the biggest blow yet to U.S. capitalist interests. Right before midnight on Aug. 6, 1960—at the closing rally of the Latin American Youth Congress, at which nearly 1,000 young people from the Americas and beyond had gathered—Castro announced the expropriation of "all the assets and enterprises located on national territory . . . that are the property of U.S. persons and legal entities."

Left: Commemorating the July 26, 1953, launching of the revolutionary war, 100,000 peasants joined the 1959 celebrations in Havana, where they were hosted by working-class families in their homes. Two months earlier, the revolutionary government had launched a deep-going agrarian reform. Right: "Breaking News," reads March 5, 1959, caption in *Revolución*, July 26 Movement's daily, depicting Cuban Electric's K-Listo learning of intervention of close friend Cuban Telephone.

'Se llamaba'

Castro read out the list of 26 U.S. companies from which Cuba was reconquering $829 million of its resources. As "Cuban Telephone Company" was read, the jubilant crowd, with working-class humor, loudly responded, *"¡Se llamaba!"* ("It used to be called!"). It would now be called the Compañía Cubana de Teléfonos 13 de Marzo, honoring freedom fighters of the Revolutionary Directorate assassinated by Batista's regime on March 13, 1957.

Cuban Electric Company, Esso, Texaco, and Sinclair Oil, were next, along with some 20 landed interests, including all 36 U.S.-owned sugar mills.

As number 24—"United Fruit Company"—was read, former Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz approached the podium and embraced the Cuban leader, eliciting particular joy among the crowd. Arbenz's government had been overthrown in 1954 in a CIA-organized coup after it approved a modest agrarian reform, threatening the interests of United Fruit, the biggest landholder there.

The trade unions then declared "Week of National Jubilation." It was celebrated across the island with rallies and "funerals." Thousands labeled coffins with the names and trademarks of the just-expropriated companies tossed them into the ocean or "cremated" them.

By the end of October 1960, Cuban toilers had expropriated virtually all imperialist-owned banks and industry, as well as the largest holdings of Cuba's capitalist class. Property relations in city and countryside had been transformed, definitively establishing the character of the revolution as socialist—the first in the hemisphere—and making clear to all that state power now served the historic interests of working people.

The First Declaration of Havana pledged that Cuban working people would use that power to assist their brothers and sisters throughout the Americas and elsewhere who "take up the arms of liberty." Nearly a half a century later, Cuba's uncompromising international solidarity has turned and continues to make that pledge a reality.

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EDITORIALS

U.S. out of Iraq, Afghanistan now!

We urge our readers to join protests in Washington, New York, and other cities around the fourth anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq to demand: U.S. and all "coalition" troops out of Iraq, Afghanistan, and all the theaters of imperialism's "war on terror"—now! Not one penny, not one person, for Washington's wars!

These demands serve the interests of working people as the U.S. rulers lead their imperialist allies in a multifront war, which they say will last decades, targeting any government that doesn't bow to Washington's dictates, and taking aim ultimately at the working class itself.

They help cut through the charade of the "Out of Iraq Caucus" in the U.S. Congress and of other Democratic politicians who pose as "antiwar," as they vote to fund the brutal war in Iraq and try to outdo the White House on the number of troops and money flowing to Afghanistan for the imperialist occupation of that country.

A majority in the United States today tell pollsters they don't support the current course of the U.S. government in Iraq. But when asked whether Washington should send in the necessary forces to "win" a new stability and then leave, most of the same individuals say yes. Many workers are influenced by the rationalizations of both ruling parties for the war. They see the brutalities of the Iraqi civil war not as a result of the U.S. invasion, but as an argument for maintaining the occupation, at least "for now," to stop "ethnic cleansing."

To these workers we must explain how London, Washington, and other imperialist powers instituted "ethnic" divisions from the time they colonized Iraq and how the policies of the occupiers today have been fomenting, not preventing, communal slaughter.

This is what we encourage our readers to do at the upcoming peace rallies and beyond.

Drop charges against Swift workers

Drop all the charges against the 220 workers arrested by immigration cops at six Swift plants in December and indicted the next month! Reverse the conviction of Lorena Andrade Rodríguez on "identity theft," and release her from prison now! Free all the workers *la migra* grabbed in the raid of a garment plant in New Bedford, Massachusetts!

These are workers, not criminals!

These demands must become the rallying cry of organized labor and all working people. A fight around them, combined with the call for immediate and unconditional legalization of undocumented workers, is essential to unite working people in the United States to effectively confront the bosses' unceasing attacks on wages, job safety, social security, and trade union rights. This is necessary for revitalizing the U.S. labor movement, which continues to weaken.

It's no accident that the government is targeting the plants where large numbers of workers went on strike last May Day to demand legalization of all immigrants. Last year's mass proletarian actions politicized the working class, as millions walked out nationwide to place *political* demands on the government. The bosses, and the White House and Congress that do their bidding, are working overtime to reverse what the workers achieved. They are picking off many worker militants and throwing them in jail or deporting them to intimidate the entire working class, while maintaining the unceasing flow of labor through the U.S.-Mexico border necessary for fattening the employers' wallets.

As the news reports from New Bedford and Cactus, Texas, in this issue alone show, however, many immigrant and other workers are not cowed. They are looking for ways to fight back, and turning for defense to the unions and coworkers. This bolsters the confidence and prospects for increasing unity in action of the working class and its allies in mutual defense.

This is the time to build the March 17 rally in New Bedford and other such mobilizations to demand: End the raids and deportations! Legalize all immigrants now! Free all the workers arrested in the Swift and other factory raids and drop all charges against them!

First worker grabbed at Swift convicted

Continued from front page

lacked proper identification. The mother of two children, Rodríguez said she did it "out of need" to support her family.

Her arrest was part of a sweep by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents of six Swift plants in six states, in which immigration cops arrested nearly 1,300 workers.

Rodríguez was one of 99 workers arrested at the Marshalltown plant and one of 30 facing criminal charges. Her conviction was the first handed down by the federal court. According to the Marshalltown daily *Times-Republican,* Rodríguez is scheduled to be sentenced in June. After serving her sentence, she will be deported. Her husband has already been deported.

In the coming weeks, six more Marshalltown workers are expected to go to trial. The rest of the workers who face criminal charges have agreed to plea agreements. Usually this means "voluntarily" leaving the country; if the worker reenters the United States it would be a federal crime, punishable with an eight to ten-year sentence.

Meanwhile, dozens of workers arrested in the raids, who do not face criminal charges, remain locked up because they are unable to raise the thousands of dollars in bail needed for their release. Those who have been able to post bond face high attorney fees while preparing for immigration hearings.

In Colorado, detained workers from the Swift plant in Greeley are not "able to post bond because Immigration and Customs Enforcement has no-bond holds on them in the Weld County Jail," reported an article in the January 18 *Greeley Tribune.*

"My son is not a robber, he is just here to work," said Teodoro Pelico, the father of one of the detained workers there, according to the *Tribune.*

LETTERS

Hurricane futures

On March 12, the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, the world's largest such market, started trading a new commodity: Hurricane Futures! In the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, insurance and energy companies and other businesses saw opportunity in catastrophe. Traders can now bet on where and with what destructive capacity a hurricane will strike. For example, if a trader owned one Hurricane Katrina future worth $1,000 it would have been worth $19,000 two days after the storm.

After Hurricane Mitch ravaged Central America in 1998, the Cuban government sent hundreds of doctors to help. Within the year Cuba began the Latin American School of Medicine to train youth from the region and improve longer-term medical care. It now educates more than 12,000 medical students from all over the world.

In contrast, a year and half after Katrina and Rita, U.S. financiers open another roulette table in their casino.

Willie Cotton,
New York, New York

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Correction

The article "South Africa's gov't carries out first large-scale land expropriation" in the March 12 issue incorrectly referred to Lulu Xingwana, South Africa's agriculture and land affairs minister, as "he." Xingwana is a woman.

Iraq escalation

Continued from front page

Sunni-led militias fighting for a bigger share of power in the Iraqi government.

Here in Washington Democrats continue to posture in "opposition" to the war. Their latest charade is to attach amendments to a $100 billion supplemental bill on war spending that would also set Sept. 1, 2008—two months before the next U.S. presidential election—as the date for withdrawing combat troops from Iraq. As with previous proposals of this type, it faces substantial opposition from within both parties.

Bush approved the additional troops to Iraq and Afghanistan during his Latin America tour. They include 4,700 "support troops" to Iraq, of whom 2,200 of these are military cops in anticipation of more arrests of Iraqis. A brigade of 3,500 will go to Afghanistan. That would bring the number of U.S. troops in Iraq to 145,000 and in Afghanistan to 30,000.

At the regional summit in Baghdad, Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki urged neighboring states to stop financing attacks and funneling weapons across their borders to Iraqi militias. Iraq's foreign minister, Hoshyar Zebari, said the states Maliki was referring to were represented at the summit. Only the governments of Iran and Syria have been accused by Washington and Baghdad of interfering militarily.

Tens of thousands of Iraqis, most of them workers, have been killed in the tit-for-tat factional fighting by militias loyal to various Shiite- and Sunni-led factions of the Iraqi capitalist class vying for power and control of the country's resources.

Meanwhile, the bill being crafted by House Democrats provides nearly $100 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, including more than what Bush requested for Afghanistan. It says that Bush would have to certify that Baghdad has met security and other "benchmarks" by the end of this year, and that U.S. troops would begin to pull out of Iraq next spring. The bill proposes that the remaining troops be out of combat roles by September 2008. Bush has said he would veto any plan that sets a timetable for troop withdrawal.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi also dropped efforts to attach a provision that would require congressional approval before any military attack on Iran. Widespread opposition was expressed to tying the president's hands on Iran during a closed-door meeting of Democratic politicians, reported the Associated Press.

Latin American tour

Continued from front page

terity demands and other such conditions for loans and trade, Bush announced he would be asking Congress to fund education and health-care programs that would supposedly benefit the region. He also tried to paint the trade agreements as a source of jobs for thousands. Bush announced an "energy partnership" with the government of Brazil to promote production of ethanol as an alternative to oil.

According to the March 6 *New York Times,* on the eve of the tour, the White House "signaled a new willingness" to include "fair trade" language in three pending deals with the governments of Panama, Peru, and Colombia. Such measures, pushed largely by the Democratic Party leadership and U.S. labor officialdom, include a ban on child labor and forced labor, and would establish standards to enable U.S. businesses to compete better against those in Latin America. The White House and most Republican politicians had previously opposed such language.

The tour by Bush came at a time of deepening class polarization in the region, popular moods against imperialist domination, and rising expectations among working people seeking livable wages and better working and living conditions.

Tens of thousands of workers, peasants, students, and others took part in rallies and other actions across the region to protest Bush's tour. In São Paulo, Brazil, more than 10,000 people reportedly marched downtown the night of Bush's arrival there. Some 30,000 rallied March 9, coinciding with Bush's visit to Uruguay, at a stadium across the River Plate in neighboring Argentina, where Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez spoke. In Bogotá, Colombia, demonstrators opposed a trade agreement between the two governments, and condemned Washington's military aid to the right-wing regime of President Alvaro Uribe.